Hebrew Bible as Literature: Robert Alter's Case

Yu Takeuchi

> I have no quarrel with the courage of conjecture of those engaged in what Sir Edmund Leach has shrewdly called "unscrambling the omelette," but the essential point for the validity of the literary perspective is that we have in the Bible, with far fewer exceptions than the historical critics would allow, a very well-made omelette indeed. ——Robert Alter

Since his influential work *The Art of Biblical Narrative* was published in 1981, Robert Alter (1935-) has figured as a forerunner, if not the only begetter, and one of the most prominent advocates to this day of the literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible.[1] In this short essay, I shall sketch some important facets of his ideas and practices, attempting to answer the following three questions: what Alter precisely means when he says he reads the Hebrew Bible as literature, how he reads that literary corpus in the concrete, and what are the fruits of his literary reading, fruits that are likely to be ignored by the classical history-oriented counterpart.

1. Bible as literature? Or on its heterogeneity

Is the Bible a piece of literature, or, to put it more modestly, an anthology of diverse literary creations? Most of the Biblical scholars at least until the early 1970s would have immediately replied no, perhaps even with a grimace, and still today many are not really ready to answer yes. Is it then in a very peculiar way how Robert Alter perceives what literature is, or how he understands what it is to read a piece of literature?

> By literary analysis I mean the manifold varieties of minutely discriminating attention to the artful use of language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative viewpoint, compositional units, and much else; the kind of disciplined attention, in other words, which through a whole

> spectrum of critical approaches has illuminated, for example, the poetry of Dante, the plays of Shakespeare, the novels of Tolstoy.[2]

These lines clearly show that our iconoclastic author has quite an orthodox perception of both literature and literary reading.[3] Surprise lies in the fact that he applies this classical literary approach to a corpus exhibiting abundant non-literary components (at least in a conventional sense). It should be how Alter looks at the Hebrew Bible, not how he looks at literature, that has been strikingly original. Alter himself, however, does acknowledge the presence of seemingly unwelcome encumbrances in the Hebrew Bible:

> [T]he Hebrew Bible quite frequently incorporates as integral elements of its literary structures kinds of writing that, according to most modern preconceptions, have nothing to do with "literature." I am thinking in particular of genealogies, etiological tales, laws (including the most technical cultic regulations), lists of tribal borders, detailed historical itineraries.[4]

Besides this heterogeneity in regards to genre, we do not lack other obstacles to our putting the Hebrew Bible in the same category with Dante, Shakespeare, and Tolstoy. The kind of authorship of literature gratuitous for being so called, where works are represented by the name of a person who wrote them, is far from being assumable for the large part of the Hebrew Bible, given that, as scholars broadly consent, many of the texts should be regarded as a composite whole from sundry sources by the hands of different writers.

> It is all very well, many biblical critics would still argue, to speak of unities and internal echoes and purposeful ambiguities in a short story by Faulkner or a poem by Wallace Stevens, because one writer was responsible for the text from beginning to end, down to the very proofreading and to any revisions in later editions. But how can we address the patchwork of the biblical text in the same fashion?[5]

To this is added the difficulty of determining the date of a text, especially when we have to deal with certain texts from the Pentateuch. Below is the continuation from the last quote.

> By what warrant, for example, could I speak of poised ambiguities in the story of Jacob and Esau when scholarship long ago concluded that the tale is a stitching together of three separate "documents" conventionally designated E, J, and P? According to a periodically challenged consensus, the first two of these would have originated in the first two centuries of the Davidic monarchy, probably drawing on still earlier folk traditions, and all three were then cut and pasted to form a single text by anonymous Priestly redactors sometime after the destruction of the First Commonwealth, probably in the sixth or fifth century B.C.E.[6]

Another even more fundamental question: is what we have as the Hebrew Bible really a dependable text to read as literature, the oldest integral manuscript being more than a millennium later than its original composition? Is it methodologically defensible to start arguing about literary ingenuity or effects before one has the definitive version of the text in question?

If, as in the reading of Dante, Shakespeare, or Tolstoy, to read the Bible as literature is "to read the 'final form' of the text as a single, unitary piece of literary art, and to see how it [...] created a 'story world' which the reader could enter and understand 'on its own terms' ",[7] such reading should, in order to reconstruct its "unity", imply harmonizing discrepancies, contradictions, redundancies, supposed glosses, interpolations, etc. of a given text, which would contrariwise lead historico-critical scholars to question any unity.

In each of these theoretical questions, not ignorable by any means, Alter in fact has a say and some suggestive insights not only for literary reading' s sake, but also on the general understanding of this above all religiously monumental corpus. But instead of going promptly to weigh how he bites back theoretically against these doubts and difficulties, we step aside now for some meanders to appreciate the artistry of the Bible, unveiled by Alter's literary analysis.

2. Authors/redactors knew better

a) 2 Samuel 5, 1-3

Let us examine first the following "supposedly defective narrative text".[8] Below the Hebrew original is Alter' s intentionally literal (not literary) translation.

1 ויבאו כל שבטי ישראל אל דוד חברונה
ויאמרו לאמר הננו עצמך ובשרך אנחנו
2 גם אתמול גם שלשום בהיות שאול מלך עלינו
אתה הייתה [ה]מוציא והמבי את ישראל
ויאמר יהוה לך אתה תרעה את עמי את ישראל
ואתה תהיה לנגיד על ישראל
3 ויבאו כל זקני ישראל אל המלך חברונה
ויכרת להם המלך דוד ברית בחברון לפני יהוה
וימשחו את דוד למלך על ישראל

1 All the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron
and said, "Here, we are your bone and flesh.
2 Long ago, when Saul was king over us,
you were Israel's leader in battle.[9]
And the Lord said to you: You shall shepherd my people[10]
and you shall be ruler over Israel."
3 All the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron,
and King David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the Lord,
and they anointed David king over Israel.

How could this passage be "defective"? In short, potentially problematic is the fact that verse 3 is a loose repetition of verses 1 and 2, which signals a rough patchwork of disparate sources. Alter, titling it to be "faulty scholarship",[11] depicts how "[t]he atomistic solution of some textual scholars" [12] operates:

> [T]wo traditions, using similar formulations, have been rather clumsily spliced together by the editor; in the first tradition, it was the tribes of Israel who came to Hebron, in the second tradition, the elders; the editorial compulsion to incorporate both traditions introduced both a redundancy and a contradiction in the text.[13]

Alter then bids defiance to this largely consented reading. He argues that this mechanical reiteration at first sight is more than what biblical scholars conventionally call resumptive repetition (repeating in order to make the important statement clear). He claims that there is a good reason to have "all the tribes" in verse 1 where the whole populace acknowledges David's kingship over them referring to the revealed divine oath, and "all the elders" in verse 3 where the authority confirms the

same in the formal anointment. Alter also draws attention to the gradual changing of the protagonist' s appellation: first "David" (v. 1), next "the king" (v. 3), then "King David" *(ibid),* appropriate subtle alteration, which corresponds to the crescendo from the folk's general acknowledgement to the solemn ritual confirmation by the selected agents. What had been regarded as quasi-duplication, nearly redundant in the eyes of specialists with ardent scissors, now reclaims its organic consistency.[14]

b) Proverbs 7, 9

The next instance is a verse in the context of moral admonition for a credulous youngster not to follow any of the flattering and shrewd women. The father, in transmitting his wisdom to his son, portrays the undesirable scene. We are to witness a foolery where a dupe steps out to the street and into the entrapment. The Hebrew text and Alter' s rendering are juxtaposed so as to make the correspondence readily visible.

At twilight, as evening falls	בנשף בערב יום
in pitch-black night and darkness	בישון לילה ואפלה

The two prepositional phrases of the first stich of this couplet are understood practically synonymous. Also the two sets of nouns in the second seemingly constructed to "pitch-black" convey approximately the same meaning. So, does this young man go out at twilight, or sheer darkness? Alter here enjoys a bit of liberty in rendering בערב יום (literally, "in the evening of day") as a subordinate clause,[15] but this is much less inventive compared to his exegesis, or unriddling, in regards to the above illogical coupling. First, the solution of an imagined textual scholar, again depicted by Alter:

> When one adds that the Hebrew word *'ishon* that I have rendered as "pitch-black" usually means the dark, or apple, of the eye and occurs in verse 2 ("let my teaching be like the apple of your eye"), we have both crux and solution. The ancient scribe, nodding, inadvertently repeated in verse 9 the word *'ishon,* which belonged only in verse 2. Then someone added "in darkness" as a gloss. What must be done to "restore" the text is to erase the whole second verset of this line and attach the first verset to the next line.[16]

By this emendation, readers are happily saved from irrational imagery: this youngster wanders out at twilight, simply and clearly. Alter, conversely, points to the specific biblical poetics where "the relation between the first verset and the second is *narrative*: under the umbrella of parallelism or overlapping meaning that covers the two halves of the line, the second action or image follows in time after the first,"[17] and holds that what we ought to discern between these two lines is not incoherence, but rather a succession of events, i.e. "in one instant, we see the young man setting out into the street at twilight; in the next instant, it is already totally dark, a suitable cover for the seductress as she marks her sexual target."[18]

Concerning the possible dittography in the word *'ishon* present in verses 2 and 9, the latter being sentenced "guilty", Alter maintains:

> [T]his makes perfect sense in terms of another principle of biblical poetics – the practice of tying together distinct segments of the poem (here, the framing introductory lines and then the narrative body of the poem) through the repetition of some prominent word, whether in the identical sense or in a play on two different senses.[19]

By this literary attentive reading, the troublesome features of the text on first inspection, namely inconsistency and suspicion of dittography, need not be branded as a heedless gloss. Artlessness for the one is here artfulness for the other. As mentioned earlier, we may not have the definitive version handed down incorrupt from the original. This example shows, however, that sounder text criticism should aspire to search for the inner logic of the text, possibly alien to us two millenniums away, before judging it as a piece of roughly patched document.

c) Genesis 38, 1-26 and its "frame-narrative"

After the two rather concise examples, we shall now take up a longer material, Genesis 38, 1-26. The story is already quite laconic, but to tersely capsulate:

Tamar was married to the first son of Judah (Er); after the death of the eldest brother, the second son of Judah (Onan), accordingly to the levirate, lays with Tamar, but he wastes his seed to the ground; this displeases God, and Onan, too, dies; in fear of loosing the third and last son (Shelah), Judah sent Tamar away to her father's house; after a long time Judah's wife (Shua) dies; leaving off mourning, Judah goes to his sheepshearers in Timnah; Tamar, being so informed, disguises in a veil,

waits for him on the road to Timnah; Judah took her for a harlot and sleeps with her, leaving a pledge (his seal, cord, and staff) to assure her that she will later receive the pay (a kid from the flock); Judah sends the kid but it does not reach the then masked recipient; three months later, Judah learns that his daughter-in-law is conceived by prostituting and hauls her in; Tamar sends the pledge to the indignant father-in-law and Judah recognizes that they are his and that it is she who is in the right.

It has been noted that the whole chapter 38 (the above narrative plus four verses accounting the birth of Tamar's twin sons) interrupts the natural flowing of the story of Joseph, from his brothers' selling him to desert merchantmen (chapter 37) to his destiny in Egypt (chapter 39 and following). Seams are too manifest to be ignored, and require hardly disciplined eyes of a specialist. It is thus befitting for a decent exegete to treat this narrative independently from the surrounding pericopes, and not to confuse disparate sources. For Alter, however, this craftsmanlike interpretation of our chapter is nothing but a "failure to see its intimate connections through motif and theme with Joseph story"[20] and this instance "suggests the limitations of conventional biblical scholarship even at its best."[21]

Following is how, for our eristic interpreter, the story of Judah and Tamar is interrelated with the preceding narrative (Gen. 37, 32-36). Firstly, they both develop around a deception: brothers make their father believe that Joseph died/ Tamar succeeds in faking as a harlot to make her father-in-law sleep with her. Or to put it from a different angle, they commonly have structure of dramatic irony; in both instances readers anticipate that the two fathers are to be deceived and watch them actually lose their retenue: Jacob grieves and mourns believing the fictitious death of Joseph/ Judah goes wrong by the ruse of his daughter-in-law and indignantly calls her up. Alter does not overlook other minute details: as in the former, the brothers dip Joseph's garment, the tool of deception and property to display Jacob's strong affection for Joseph, into the blood of a goat (שעיר עזים) / and in the latter, a kid (גדי עזים), for which a precious pledge was exacted, is the price for Judah's crude sexual desire. Around this "goat" (sg. עז : "hairy" i.e. grown in one, and "cropping" i.e. young in the other) are symbolized two loves of two fathers: fatherly affectionate, and carnal, respectively. And of course, clothes are used for two ruses; in the latter case for Tamar's disguise.

Furthermore, the same verb (נכר > הכיר) is used to mark the crucial moment of both stories. In Alter's recent translation:

> Gen. 37, 32-33: [A]nd they sent the ornamented tunic and had it brought to their father, and they said, "This we found. Recognize, pray (הכר נא), is it your son's tunic or not? And he recognized it (ויכירה), and he said, "It is my son's tunic. A vicious beast has devoured him, / Joseph is torn to shreds!"[22]

> Genesis 38, 25-26: Out she [Tamar] was taken, when she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong I have conceived," and she said, "Recognize, pray (הכר נא), whose are this seal-and-cord and this staff?" And Judah recognized (ויכר) them and he said, "She is more in the right than I, for have I not failed to give her to Shelah, my son?" And he knew her again no more.[23]

The translator vividly comments on the significance of this parallel:

> Like a trap suddenly springing closed, the connection with the preceding story of the deception of Jacob is now fully realized. In precise correspondence to Judah and his brothers, Tamar "sends" evidence – in this case, true evidence – to argue her case. Like them, she confronts the father figure with the imperative, "Recognize, pray" (*haker-na'*) [...] and, like his father, Judah is compelled to acknowledge that he recognizes what has been brought to him.[24]
> Judah with Tamar after Judah with his brothers is an exemplary narrative instance of the deceiver deceived[.][25]

The echo between chapter 38 and the subsequent narrative is also acutely observed: "The same verb (הכיר), moreover, will play a crucial thematic role in the dénouement of the Joseph story when he confronts his brothers in Egypt, he recognizing them, they failing to recognize him. [...] Finally, when we return from Judah to Joseph story (Genesis 39), we move in pointed contrast from a tale of exposure through sexual incontinence to a tale of seeming defeat and ultimate triumph through sexual continence – Joseph and Potiphar's wife."[26] And this is how Alter senses the traces "not of some automatic mechanism of interpolating traditional materials but of careful splicing of sources by a brilliant literary artist."[27]

3. Unity reconstructed

As the above readings confirm, Robert Alter's literary analysis consists of acute attention to subtly nuanced use of language, to inner organizing principle of composition, and to reticent but allusive character of narrative. And to detect patiently and delightfully such literary artfulness of the Hebrew Bible was also to reconstruct its suspected unity. With this literary approach, redundancy, discrepancy, and discontinuity at first glance were not necessarily the signs to canalize readers into presumption of inadvertent patchworking, dittography, gloss, or interpolation. Artistry thus discovered not only compensates the diligence and hope to appreciate the received text, but also opens a new horizon to the biblical concept of weaving of a text and its particular "authorship". I quote again the words of our keen and insightful Bible reader: first on the composite nature of the Pentateuch and second on the collective authorship with felicitous metaphor:

> All that I have said here of course does not constitute a claim that the Five books from "When God began to create ..." to "before the eyes of all Israel" form one continuous text. The Torah is manifestly a composite construction, but there is abundant evidence throughout the Hebrew Bible that composite work was fundamental to the very conception of what literature was, that a process akin to collage was assumed to be one of the chief ways in which literary texts were put together.[28]

> Modern biblical scholarship is a product of the post-Gutenberg era, which may be one reason why it is predisposed to conceive authorship in rather narrow and exclusive terms. Collective works of art are not unknown phenomena, as we should be reminded by the medieval cathedrals growing through generations under the hands of successive waves of artisans, or cinema, where the first-stage work of director, cameraman, and actors achieves its final form in the selection, splicing, and reordering that goes on in the editing room.[29]

There seems to be much we can learn and benefit from this literary sensitive and analytic method and its borne fruits, if "the goal is to lead us toward what the biblical authors and author-redactors surely aimed for – a continuous *reading* of the text instead of a nervous hovering over its

various small components." [30]

4. Supplementary remarks

As an appendium, a few words on the historicity of Alter's argument and some reserves concerning technicality may be in order.

In his defense of a literary approach to the Hebrew Bible, Alter oftentimes gives the impression that this method is something quite opposed to the so-called historico-critical analysis. He appears rather eristic when he treats preceding "conventional biblical scholarship". Historical context for this was, of course, that the latter had been so dominant, almost sweeping away any exegetical endeavour at that period. But today, this dichotomy or controversy between history versus literature should, in my opinion, be applied with a certain moderation.

E. A. Speiser, cited by Alter just before beginning his exegesis of Genesis 38, was to present the "limitations of conventional scholarship even at its best." [31] It is true that Speiser does not share Alter's extravagant demonstration of parallels between the selling of Joseph and Tamar's witty saving of herself (see 2, c above). He seems far from depicting the motif of "deceiver deceived" in the whole narrative continuum. However, it is interesting how he presents his modest finding:

> The place of the present account was chosen with keen literary sensitivity. To his family, Joseph had disappeared from view – forever, as far as they knew. From the viewpoint of the reader, moreover, the ill-treated boy is in temporary eclipse. What better place, then, to take up the slack with a different story, one that covers many years?[32]

Sensing literary sensitivity (to quote Speiser), though perhaps not exercised fully fledged, is neither abandoned by nor excluded from the historico-analytic approach. In other words, failing to hear some subtle echo between distinct pericopes may not necessarily be intrinsic in its method. In my view, Alter in turn fails to do justice to Speiser's striving to comprehend the significance in the interpolation, when he makes Speiser represent a literary non-sensitive and exclusively history-oriented approach.

The history of interpretation has indeed shown that the tendency of "the more atomistic, the more scientific" led many exegetes of the *old school* to isolate identifiable segments as minutely as possible and to

contain themselves in that enterprise.[33] But we should note that these phenomena were not in accordance with the original aim of the historico-analytic method per se, even if indirectly encouraged by it. It may be appropriate here to quote the epigraph of a well-known German introductory text of the historico-analytic method: "the more accurately one understands, the greater the surprise becomes."[34] The words are from a renowned classical pianist (Alfred Brendel, 1931-). If meticulous research of historical background on a particular music score or its composer invites the musician to a better understanding and greater enjoyment of that piece of music as a whole, why not for the biblist with biblical texts?

Now for the technicality, namely Alter's fictitious biblical scholar exercising his privilege to cross out seeming encumbrances from the text of Proverbs (see 2, b above). So far as we know, no commentary indulges itself in such a violent operation on the text. The text (Proverbs 7, 9) in fact does flow as it is.

> At twilight as evening falls/ in the middle of the night in the sheer darkness.

Read most plainly, two different periods of time are simply juxtaposed. The gullible youngster goes entrapped by a harlot either just after the sunset (shamelessly defeated by his incontrollable impulse) or when the night is completely dark (which may protect him from the dishonour). At most, the insertion of "or" or "and" between the two stichs would do.[35] Yet, Alter is not alone in feeling the need to harmonize these stichs.[36] But none of these exegetes is so reckless as to "erase the whole second verset of this line and attach the first verset to the next line."[37]

Also, Alter's claim does not sound so plausible, when he reads the quick transition from evening twilight to pitch-black night and sees a narrative between them, in order to reconstruct the suspected unity, even with his knowledge of the Mediterranean settings. As the word *'ishon* means "middle", the second stich must refer to midnight;[38] no sunset can be succeeded immediately by midnight (except perhaps in the estival Scandinavian climate). Far from eliminating the latter half, some "conventional" scholars even detect a chiastic structure in these two stichs: "twilight" (*a*, degree of light), "evening" (*b*, degree of time)/ "midnight" (*b'*, degree of time), "darkness" (*a'*, degree of light), and see the careful splicing of different elements.[39] Despite his splendid exercise of literary sensitivity, the general persuasiveness of his argument on

behalf of the literary analytic approach towards sounder criticism, together with his inimitable wordsmithery, Robert Alter also has a right to commit some venial errors. Here he seems to have built a man of straw and to be fighting against it.

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1 The first chapter of Erich Auerbach's Mimesis is considered often as a pioneering work as appreciating the Hebrew Bible with literary perspective. For the concise history of literary approaches, see J. W. Rogerson, "Old Testament" in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, eds. J. W. Rogerson and Judith M. Lieu (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2006), pp. 16-18. A critical and recent overview equipped with the selected bibliography is offered in Margaret M. Mitchell's article, "Rhetorical and New Literary Criticism" in the same volume, pp. 615-633. See also the first chapter, "A Literary Approach to the Bible" of Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Basic Books, New York, 1981), pp. 13-22, where an analytic introduction on and at the dawn of this school of interpretation can be found.

2 Alter, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

3 On Alter's view of literature in general (i.e. not exclusively biblical), see the first chapter of *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1989).

4 Robert Alter, "Introduction to the Old Testament" in *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, eds. Robert Alter and Frank Kermode (Collins, London, 1987), p. 16.

5 *Op.cit.*, p. 24.

6 *Op.cit.*, pp. 24-25.

7 Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 626.

8 Alter, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

9 Alter recapitulates two substantives into one nominal phrase. Cf. "thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel" (KJV). "it was you that led out and brought in Israel" (RSV)

10 The second direct object "Israel" is omitted from Alter's translation, presumably to balance the couplet.

11 *Op. cit.*, p. 28.
12 *Ibid.*
13 *Ibid.*
14 More examples of the similar kind of artful repetition, with appealing demonstration by Alter's carefully chosen wording, are to be found in the fifth chapter of *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (cited above), pp. 88-113.
15 Alter's earlier and more word-for-word translation of the same distich runs: "At twilight, at eventide, in the dark of night and gloom". See *The Art of Biblical Poetry*, (Basic Books, New York, 1985), p. 55. In the chapter entitled "From Line to Story" of the same volume, there is a more full-scale analysis on the whole Proverbs 7 (pp. 55-61).
16 Alter, *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 27.
17 *Ibid.*
18 *Ibid.*
19 *Op. cit.*, p. 28.
20 Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 4.
21 *Ibid.*
22 Alter, *The Five Books of Moses*, (Norton, New York, 2004), pp. 212-13.
23 *Op. cit.*, p. 219.
24 *Ibid.*
25 *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 10.
26 *Ibid.*
27 *Ibid.*
28 *The Five Books of Moses*, pp. xv-xvi.
29 *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 25.
30 *Op. cit.*, p. 26.
31 *Art of Biblical Narrative*, p. 4.
32 E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (*The Anchor Bible*), (Doubleday, New York, 1964), pp. 299-300.
33 See for example on the same chapter Gen. 38, Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (*Old Testament Library*), tr. J. H. Marks, (SCM, London, 1963[2] and revised), pp. 351-52.
34 H. Barth & O. H. Steck, *Exegese des Alten Testaments: Leitfaden der Methodik* (Neukirchener, Neukirchen, 1980).
35 Crawford H. Toy, *Proverbs (ICC)*, (T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 146-47.
36 R. B. Y. Scott renders here "In the dusk when evening was coming on, When the time for sleep comes with the darkness", in *Proverbs/Ecclesiastes (Anchor Bible)* (Doubleday, New York, 1965), p. 63. This requires us to understand the word *'ishon* as deriving from *'ysn* and causes inconsistency with the verse 2. For other interpretations, see William McKane, *Proverbs* (*Old Testament Library*), (SCM Press, London, 1970), pp. 220-21; p. 336. R. N. Whybray, *Proverbs (The Cambridge Bible Commentary)*, (Cambridge U. P., Cambridge, 1972), pp. 42-45.
37 Alter, *The Literary Guide to the Bible*, p. 27. Cited above.
38 Cf. verse 2 of the same chapter. The word literally means "little man" deriving from *'ish* (man). When you see closely someone's eye, you see a little man, yourself reflected in the pupil of that eye, hence "pupil of the eye", i.e. treasure to

cherish. The same word in our verse 9, therefore, should mean "the centre of night" as Charles T. Fritsch renders: *Proverbs (The Interpreter's Bible vol. IV)*, (Abingdon, New York, 1955), p. 824.

39 *Toy, op. cit.*, p. 148.